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SIPDIS

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DEPT FOR OIIP, AF/PD-A.HUSBANDS AND SAM WESTGATE
DEPT ALSO FOR IIP/G/AF

E.O. 12958: N/A
TAGS: [OIIP](#) [KPAO](#) [SL](#)
SUBJECT: MEDIA PLACEMENTS FOR MARCH 2006

REF: FREETOWN 0067

11. Post and Mission Activities/Press Releases:

1A. Post issued a press release on the Nationwide HIV/AIDS education tour. The US Government, through the US Department of Defense, sponsored the tour. Sierra Leone's internationally acclaimed musician Steady Bongo and the Republic of Sierra Leone Armed Forces Musicians performed throughout the country giving free concerts where they sang songs from their newly recorded album "RSLAF and Steady Bongo."

The local press reported as follows:
"US Government supports HIV/AIDS campaign tour" CONCORD TIMES 3/2,
"US Government sponsors free steady Bongo/RSLAF tour promoting the dangers of HIV/AIDS" INDEPENDENT OBSERVER 3/3
"US Government sponsors Steady Bongo/RSLAF tour" THE POOL 3/6
Private owned FM 98.1 News 3/1 & 3/2
Govt. owned FM 99.9 News 3/1 & 3/2
Private owned SKYY FM 106 News 3/1 & 3/2

1B. Post launched a new website for Sierra Leone at <http://freetown.usembassy.gov>. It allows the Sierra Leone public to log on to activities of the US Embassy in Freetown, visa instructions, commercial information, press releases, and provides easy access to useful US Government information.

The local press reported as follows:
"US launches new website for Salone" THE NEWS 3/7
"US Embassy launches new website" THE NEW CITIZEN 3/7, STANDARD TIMES 3/7, INDEPENDENT OBSERVER 3/8, THE EXCLUSIVE 3/9, THE SPECTATOR 3/13
"US Embassy gets new website" CONCORD TIMES 3/7
Govt. owned FM 99.9 News 3/7 & 3/8
Private owned SKYY FM 106 News 3/7 & 3/8

1C. The Deputy Chief of Mission awarded 720 scholarships as part of the Ambassador's Girls Scholarship Fund. The ceremony took place on February 122. The 720 recipients were from 24 schools in the Bombali District, Northern Sierra Leone. This is a continuation of the US Ambassador's Girls Scholarship (AGS) that the Ambassador launched in June 2005. The AGS fund is initially providing assistance to 3,000 girls in 5 districts in Sierra Leone.

The local press reported as follows:
"American scholarships for 720 girls" INDEPENDENT OBSERVER 3/10
"720 GIRLS BENEFIT FOR US Ambassador's scholarship" THE NEWS 3/13

"US Ambassador's Scholarship benefit girls" THE SPECTATOR 3/13
"720 girls in Bombali District benefit from the Ambassador's Girls Scholarship Initiative" THE EXCLUSIVE 3/13

12. KEY MEDIA STORIES

1A. The issue of ex-President of Liberia Charles Taylor's return to Liberia took a dramatic turn in March. Liberia's President Sirleaf-Johnson asked the Government of Nigeria (GON) to return Charles Taylor to Liberia from his 3-year asylum in Nigeria. On March 27, Taylor tried to escape from Nigeria, was caught by Nigerian authorities who immediately put him on a GON plane for Monrovia where he was transferred to UN helicopters for onward transfer to Freetown and the Special Court for Sierra Leone (SCSL). The SCSL indicted him on 11 counts of war crimes (amended from 17 counts). Taylor made his first appearance at the Special Court on April 3 and pleaded not guilty to all counts. The public debate continues over whether, because of security concerns in Sierra Leone and Liberia, he should be tried in Freetown or by the SCSL sitting in The Hague. There is strong editorial opinion on both sides. Post reports these in daily press summaries.

The local press reported as follows:

"Obasanjo urged to surrender Taylor" CONCORD TIMES 3/3
INDEPENDENT OBSERVER 2/6
"Nigeria may extradite Taylor" CONCORD TIMES 3/13
"Obsanjo plays cat and mouse game over Taylor" THE INDEPENDENT 3/13
"Charles Taylor's wife warns against arrest."My husband is still influential in Liberia" INDEPENDENT OBSERVER 3/14
"From Calaba to Lagos airport. Obasanjo writes Charles Taylor" STANDARD TIMES 3/14
"Charles Taylor's asylum discussed" AWOKO 3/15
"Charles Taylor arrives" THE EXCLUSIVE 3/16
"Obasanjo, Johnson-Sirleaf hang heads on extraditing Charles Taylor" INDEPENDENT OBSERVER 3/16
"Obsanjo, Sirleaf, discuss Taylor's asylum" AFRICAN STANDARD 3/17
"President requests surrender of Taylor" THE EXCLUSIVE 3/20
"Obasanjo to hand over Taylor after consultations" CONCORD TIMES 3/20
"Calls for rapid handover of Taylor" THE TRUMPET 3/20
"Taylor's sins coming home to roost? INDEPENDENT VOICE 3/21
"We await Charles Taylor's extradition" INDEPENDENT OBSERVER 3/21
"RUFP says trying Taylor is dangerous" CONCORD TIMES 3/22
"As Sirleaf gives the green light.Taylor to arrive soon" THE EXCLUSIVE 3/23
"Forum of Conscience supports Charles Taylor hand over" AWARENESS TIMES 3/23, INDEPENDENT OBSERVER 3/23
"Surrender Taylor now - AI, COJA urge" NEW VISION 3/24
"Amnesty campaigns for Taylor to face Special Court" AWOKO 3/24
"Taylor under fire" THE EXCLUSIVE 3/24
"Charles Taylor at cross roads" NEW VISION 3/24
"Whether Taylor comes or not.who cares" THE EXCLUSIVE 3/24
"Taylor's trial not important for Salone" TRC Chairman" CONCORD TIMES 3/24
"Nigeria to give up Taylor" THE DEMOCRAT 3/27
"Warrant of arrest for Charles Taylor" AWOKO 3/28
"Take Charles Taylor elsewhere" THE SPECTATOR 3/28
"Taylor, Taylor, Taylor Bullshit!" THE EXCLUSIVE 3/28
(Comment: The local press is often startlingly robust in the use of the vernacular. End Comment.)

1B. In an interview with the British Broadcasting

Cooperation (BBC) Minister of Health Abator Thomas said that the government of Sierra Leone is concerned about the bird flu threat and has set up a committee that is currently looking into the threat the disease poses. She also told the BBC that the US Embassy, UNICEF, WHO and the International Military Assistance Training Team (IMATT) are complementing the work of the committee.

The local Press reported as follows"

"Bird Flu scare - Health Minister speaks out" THE NEW STORM 3/8

1C. Three members of the Revolutionary United Front (RUF) rebel group who were standing trial at the High Court in Freetown were sentenced to 30 years imprisonment on March 10. Each accused person has 3 ten years sentences to be served concurrently. They were found guilty for conspiracy to murder and shooting with intent.

The local press reported as follows:

"3 RUF members jailed 30 years each" THE EXCLUSIVE 3/13

"3 RUF jailed for 10 years" THE NEWS 3/13

"Ten years imprisonment for 3 RUF men" INDEPENDENT OBSERVER 3/13

1D. Advanced Industrial Minerals Incorporated, an American company based in Brunswick, Georgia, is currently involved in ilmenorutile and gold mining in Kemendugu town in Bumbuna, northern Sierra Leone. The Bumbuna Paramount Chief Alimamy Bokari Yillah Koroma expressed appreciation over the fact that the company has employed 160 people from the community and rehabilitated the 11-mile road from Kemendugu to Bumbuna.

The local press reported as follows:

"American Company rescues Bumbuna" NEW VISION 3/17

1E. Editor of the Concord Times Newspaper, Sahr Musa Yamba, was arrested on March 20 by plain-clothes policemen, and taken to the Criminal Investigation Department. The policemen said that they had orders from the Attorney General (AG) Frederick Carew to arrest Yamba. Yamba told PolAsst that he was arrested on the orders of the Attorney General for publishing an article in his March 17 edition, entitled: "Golley brands Attorney General a liar." He said the AG threatened to bring charges against him, and said that members of the press are trying to damage his reputation. Yamba was released and asked to report the following day, but when he did so, he was told that the affair has been dropped.

The local press reported as follows:

Concord Times editor arrested" THE NEW CITIZEN 3/21, THE SPECTATOR 3/21

"Concord Times editor detained" THE NEW VISION 3/21

"Editor arrested" THE EXCLUSIVE 3/21

"Why CID arrest Concord Times editor?" AFRICAN CHAMPION 3/21

1F. Journalist and broadcaster Mariama Coker is among 14 journalists from 12 African countries in Washington DC attending the April 1-22 the Edward R Murrow Program for Journalists. She gave a presentation in the Information Resource Center as part of Women in History Month. The text of her talk was printed in full in Salone Times.

The local press reported as follows:

"Veteran female journalist for training in America" SALONE TIMES 3/28

13. GENERAL ARTICLES ABOUT THE US

"Video shows Bush Katrina warning" AWOKO 3/3

"Bush praises Afghanistan progress" EVENING SCOOP 3/3,

NEW STORM 3/3

"Bush finalizes India nuclear deal" THE NEWS 3/3, NEW
VISION 3/3, THE SPECTATOR 3/3

"Bush praises Pakistan terror role" THE SPECTATOR 3/6

"Pentagon reviews Guantanamo names" INDEPENDENT

OBSERVER 3/7

"Republicans defy Bush over Ports" AWOKO 3/9

"Congress sets up fight with Bush" FOR DI PEOPLE 3/13

"US seek further pressure on Iran" FOR DI PEOPLE 3/13

"US hostage in Iraq confirmed dead" THE DEMOCRAT 3/15

"US hostage shot, tortured" NEW CITIZEN 3/13

"Bush immigration bill causes sleepless nights" THE
INDEPENDENT 3/13

"Bush adviser charged with theft" THE DEMOCRAT 3/14

"US panel to study policy in Iraq" NEW CITIZEN 3/20

"US warns over Iran talks tactic" INDEPENDENT OBSERVER
3/20

"US captures 13 Somali Pirates" NEW VISION 3/21,
CHRISTIAN MONITOR 3/21

"Bush upbeat on Iraq anniversary" NEW VISION 3/21

"America celebrates three years stay in Iraq with
violence" AFRICAN CHAMPION 3/22

"US Military probes Iraq killings" AWOKO 3/23

14. Ratio of Positive to Negative stories about the US
was 10:8. STEWART